

# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 100 106

EC 070 976

**TITLE** Programming for the Language Disabled Child: Booklet 2: Essential Professional Skills.

**INSTITUTION** Texas Education Agency, Austin.

**NOTE** 10p.; For related information see EC 070 975-992

**EDRS PRICE** MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE

**DESCRIPTORS** \*Diagnostic Teaching; \*Evaluation; Exceptional Child Education; \*Language Handicapped; Learning Disabilities; \*Performance Based Teacher Education; \*Teaching Methods

**IDENTIFIERS** \*Project CHILD

## ABSTRACT

The booklet describes professional skills thought to be essential for teachers of language handicapped children in the areas of diagnosis, instruction, and evaluation. These skills were developed by Project CHILD, a research effort to validate identification, intervention, and teacher education programs for use with language handicapped children. Intended primarily for school administrators developing programs, the booklet is also relevant to universities planning teacher education courses or programs and to individual teachers desirous of improving instructional proficiency. Competencies briefly discussed include competent observation practices and use and interpretation of standardized testing instruments (in the area of diagnosis); the establishment of specific instructional objectives and the design and implementation of individualized programs (in the area of instruction); and identification and assessment of target behaviors and analysis of the instructional program (in the area of evaluation). (DB)

Programming for the

**Language**

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**Disabled**

**Child**

**Booklet II**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
EDUCATION AND WELFARE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
EDUCATION



## **ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

**Project CHILD**

**Texas Education Agency**

**Austin, Texas**

EC070976

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Recommendation of the professional skills included in this booklet is the result of research conducted through Project CHILD, a Texas Education Agency research project. A project goal was the development of a model curriculum for the preparation of teachers of language handicapped children. The program which was developed is a competency based, packaged system which emphasizes the development of the skills described here.

The curriculum was evaluated both in terms of its effect on classroom teaching behavior and with regard to the resulting impact on student achievement. Complete research results are available in the final research report. The curriculum itself is also a part of that final report.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this booklet is to present those professional skills and understandings in which the teacher of language disabled children should be competent. As such it is directed primarily toward the school administrator faced with the task of developing a program for these children. This information should be helpful in the evaluation of present staff members to determine their potential in the program, in developing criteria for the employment of necessary additional personnel and in determining the type and extent of in-service education activities which are needed.

The booklet may also prove useful to the university professor in planning either single courses or whole programs for teachers of language handicapped children. The skills included here are based upon teaching competencies and should be a part of any program designed to prepare these teachers.

The individual teacher preparing himself for a new assignment, or simply desirous of improving his instructional proficiency, will find this booklet helpful in giving direction to his efforts. He should be able to compare his current skills with the competencies recommended here and base his plans upon the resulting comparison.

## **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

The teacher of language disabled children should be competent in several broad areas of instructional responsibility. Abilities in these areas are somewhat complementary in that each contributes to the teacher's successful intervention into the pattern of repeated academic failure and frustration experienced by children with a language handicap.

One such broad category of competence is that of diagnosis. This specialized teacher must be able to use both informal and formal procedures to identify children needing special help as the result of a language deficiency. To go a step further, the specific problem must be isolated from among a wide range of possible conditions causing the disability.

Having identified the child needing help and the factor creating that necessity, the teacher must plan an instructional program which will either remove the obstruction to learning or alleviate the condition to such an extent that the child can progress at a satisfactory rate. This plan must then be put to work in the classroom. The teacher must therefore be able to develop educational plans based upon specific needs and implement those plans in the dynamic situation of the school.

The effectiveness of these plans must of course be measured carefully to determine whether the projected results are being achieved, requiring examination of both the child's progress and the teacher's implementation of the prepared plans. The outcome of this process will provide the basis for deciding whether to continue the plans as proposed, make minor changes in its implementation, or start afresh with a revised diagnosis.

The distinct steps in this cycle suggest the broad areas of responsibility in which the teacher must be competent. He must diagnose, instruct, and evaluate. While each of these areas includes a rather broad array of skills and understandings, they do offer a very natural structure for clustering these skills into groups of closely related abilities. Therefore, the competencies suggested in the above paragraphs are described somewhat more specifically under **DIAGNOSIS, INSTRUCTION, EVALUATION.**

## DIAGNOSIS

As stated in the preceding section, the specialized language disability teacher must be skilled in identifying children whose learning problems result from a language handicap and in detecting the specific conditions of these deficiencies. This, of course, places a heavy responsibility upon the teacher and requires a significant level of competence in the use of formal and informal appraisal procedures.

The teacher must have a thorough understanding of the distinct behavioral patterns found to be characteristic of language disabled children. This includes a comprehensive knowledge of those characteristics as described in the literature of this field and the ability to apply that knowledge in identifying children in whom the characteristics are detected. Specifically, the teacher should be able to recognize overt behavior patterns which are frequently associated with language disability. Both the observation of the child's physical activities and an analysis of his academic performance should be considered as necessary competencies.

Observation skills should be based upon systematic methods which state purposes and procedures explicitly. Abilities of this kind should assist the teacher in isolating particular behaviors indicative of language disability and separating students who only occasionally behave in those ways from students who habitually do so.

In addition to competent observation practices, the teacher must be familiar with and able to use any one of several screening techniques useful in the tentative identification of language handicapped children. These range from relatively short, easily administered tests of physical and mental abilities to rather complicated formulas which compare one's achievement potential with his actual achievement record. The teacher should be able to practice these skills, such as observation and formula application, and to interpret their results appropriately.

Such a teacher must also be familiar with and able to use systems for evaluating a child's development in social areas. Of concern are the child's peer and family relations as well as his acceptance of and by the school environment to which he belongs. The teacher must gauge these aspects of the child's

life in relation to those factors of a more academically oriented nature.

Of course diagnosis must include the use of standardized testing instruments and the interpretation of those scores derived from such tests. The specialized teacher of language handicapped students should be familiar with general achievement tests and diagnostic instruments which help to identify particular skill deficits in the several areas of school endeavors. This would include the ability to select an appropriate standardized test based upon the reasons for using it. Also necessary is the teacher's ability to administer the test so that valid information is obtained. The teacher must, in addition, be able to interpret the scores derived from these measures to make decisions on such matters as the need for further appraisal and the correct placement of the student in instructional materials.

The teacher should have several competencies related to more complex measures of psychological and intellectual development. Although the teacher should not be required to attain the level of competence expected of one who administers and interprets these tests, he should have a thorough understanding of the various subtests and the factors which each measures. Additionally, he needs some knowledge of how these instruments are designed to measure the characteristics in question.

The abilities described in the preceding paragraph are directed toward important competencies required of the specialized teacher of language handicapped children. These competencies include the teacher's understanding of test results reported by skilled psychologists and psychometrists and his ability to use that information to improve instruction for children. Thus, the teacher must be familiar with such tests and the manner in which their results are interpreted to the extent that he can interrelate data obtained from them with his own diagnostic information and use it to select appropriate instructional materials and techniques for individual students.

To summarize the professional skills requisite in the area of diagnosis, the teacher must be competent in the use of a broad array of appraisal practices. This extends from skilled observation, to administering and interpreting the results of a



host of standardized measurement instruments, and on to the wise use of information supplied by appraisal specialists.

## **INSTRUCTION**

Developing those skills which enable one to teach effectively should obviously be at the heart of any teacher education program. Such competencies include an understanding of how people learn, the ability to identify precisely those factors which are to be learned, knowledge of and the ability to apply diverse instructional approaches, and, finally, skill in the development and implementation of individualized instructional programs.

Effective instructional practices seem to be based upon sound theory and research on the nature of learning. Thus, teachers charged with the responsibility for teaching children with a history of learning problems should even more than the regular teacher have a solid foundation in learning theory and research upon which to base their instructional efforts. Such teachers have a crucial need to understand the factors that contribute to learning and the essential features of instructional practices that have proven successful in experimental situations.

Another competency particularly important to this type of teacher is the ability to establish specific objectives. Both children and teacher need goals which are identified precisely and insure that the handicapping condition is being overcome. Students need the regular reinforcement derived from achievement acknowledged by the teacher. When attainable objectives are stated so that instructional outcomes can be measured, progress can be monitored systematically, and reinforcement should be forthcoming.

The repertoire of the teacher for language handicapped children should include a broad range of successful approaches to the remediation of these problems. Familiarity with and the ability to apply these techniques is essential, including the selection of a particular methodology based upon prior diagnosis. While each teacher should be expected to develop a basic approach that is in harmony with his personality, he must be versatile in concentrating upon various developmental areas, in choosing appropriate instructional materials, in using correct incentives, and in giving direction to each student's personal approach to learning.



Something of a culmination of the teacher's professional skill in instruction is his ability to design and implement individualized instructional programs. This competency requires that he synthesize all of his diagnostic skills, his understanding of learning theory, his familiarity with various intervention techniques, his skill in the instructional process into an effective, workable plan for correcting a child's language deficiency.

In summary, the teacher of language handicapped children must be in command of basic information on the conditions of learning, able to establish specific and measurable objectives, skillful in the use of a variety of methodological approaches, and capable of synthesizing these competencies into individualized plans for instruction.

## **EVALUATION**

The third general type of professional capability which the teacher of language disabled children should possess is evaluation. Without competencies of this sort, skills of diagnosis and instruction often go for naught. Just as precision teaching techniques are particularly important to the specialized teacher, so also are evaluative skills. Working with children who have the potential but have not been able to capitalize on that ability makes imperative the teacher's systematic, continuous audit, seeking to balance the child's capacity and the instructional energy with the expected progress.

The efficient conduct of an evaluative process requires the initial skill of identifying the specific student behavioral changes to be measured. An accurate assessment of the behavior(s) must be attained prior to the treatment. The teacher must then select or design procedures which will yield reliable, valid data on those behaviors being evaluated. The teacher should be able to use those procedures and to interpret the resulting data accurately.

In addition to assessment of student performance, the teacher must evaluate his own instructional process. Therefore, he must be able to describe exactly the various elements of the program designed to cause whatever behavioral changes are sought. He must also be able to analyze his own

implementation of the program to determine the extent to which the plans were effected.

Efficient use of information gained from the evaluation procedures described in the preceding paragraphs requires that the teacher be able to share assessment results with others, including students, parents, other teachers, and administrators. The teacher should, therefore, be able to make available to each interested person or group that information which will be meaningful and useful.

Requisite professional skills in this area, in summary, include the essential elements of the accountability concept. The teacher must be able to establish specific objectives, design a plan to reach those objectives, monitor implementation of the plan, evaluate attainment of the objectives and make public the results.

## **SUMMARY**

The essential professional skills for teachers of language handicapped children are described in this booklet as they relate to the three discrete teaching tasks — Diagnosis, Instruction, Evaluation. These teachers should be able to use a variety of appraisal instruments and techniques and to use appraisal results effectively. They must also be competent in the formulation of instructional plans and in classroom performance. In addition such specialized teaching requires systematic evaluation of instructional outcomes.

The competencies outlined in this booklet were the principal focus of the staff development research conducted by Project CHILD. They are a part of the complete, packaged teacher preparation curriculum included in the final research report. Also included in the final report are results of the research which evaluated the impact of the curriculum upon classroom teaching behavior and student achievement.